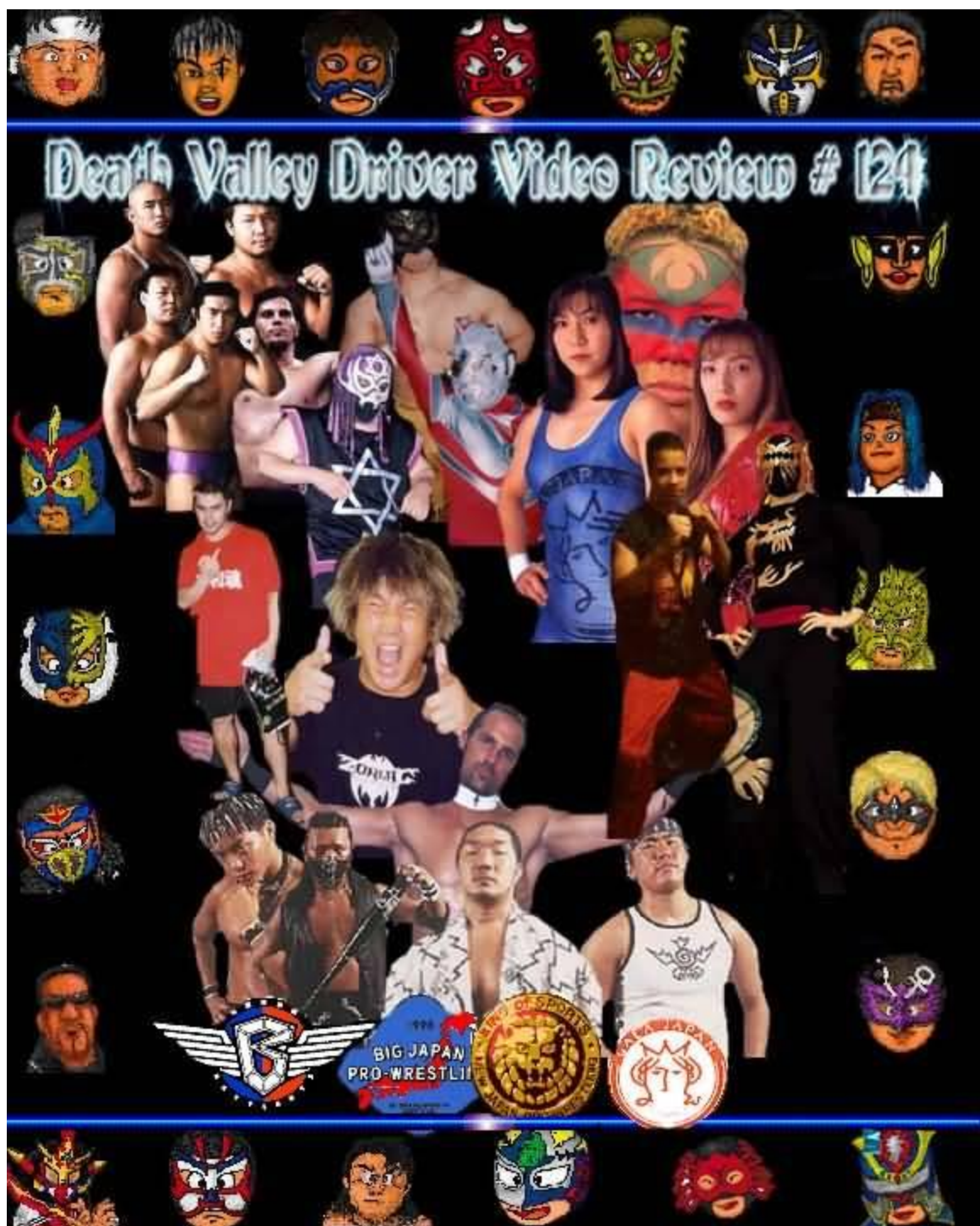




The cover to this DVDVR was assembled by Wes Hatch- a gifted artist from the great state of Georgia.

GAEA GIRLS! BENOIT vs. REGAL! BRET HART! ZIPANG! More ZIPANG! Even More ZIPANG!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #124

Ah. The beloved Professional Wrestling. What else could you possibly love more when it comes to truly fucked art forms that thrill you in weird inexplicable ways. We took a little time off and went through a lot of shit and rested and regained our energies and all that other stuff that happens about every 25 DVDVRs so let's have at it already. I give you REV
RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAY!

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!@!@!@!@!@! A Movie Review: GAEA Girls
(REV RAY DUFFY!)

While not quite a video yet, Pete and I ended up hitting GAEA Girls at a film festival at the NY Museum of Natural History.

GAEA Girls focuses on the story of Saika Takeuchi, who is in training to become a GAEA wrestler. Takeuchi is interviewed about why she wants to be a wrestler and her answer is because she wants to be a wrestler and she says because she feels this is her chance to be someone. Basically, that as herself, she is shy and quiet, but in the ring she can be larger than life. The film starts off with Takeuchi training and Wakabashi returning to the garage. The garage is basically everything for the younger girls, it serves as their home, their gym and their ring. It seems like all of the younger girls are living there amidst bins and banners and posters and boxes of merchandise for the promotion. Wakabashi had quit before and was returning for a second go at becoming a wrestler. Chigusa jokingly (or maybe not) says if Wakabashi drops out again, that she'll kill her. We never come to find out as Wakabashi ends up running away one night, apparently having had enough of the gym. There's some footage showed from the Double Destiny match filmed where Chigusa blows fire at Lioness Aska and wins the GAEA promotion back from the Super Star Unit. More footage is showed at the gym, Takeuchi works with Satomura in the ring as Nagashima referee. Satomura is not happy with how Takeuchi's performing and yells (as it was translated by the British) "Now you're taking the piss!" and delivers a drop kick that's so brutal at least 2 people bolted from theatre as Saika is bleeding from the mouth or face as a result. The drop kick needed no translation. They chastise Saika for not giving her all in the work out, questioning her who taught her to wrestle like that, telling her if you don't give it your all when you're in the ring, that's when people get hurt. I watch this and secretly wish someone would send Satomura over to the US to work some sparring with Nash and Luger. Saika, though she needs stitches for the injury, continues her training. However, the brutality of the sparring session scares another trainee who's name I didn't catch into quitting. The trainee basically said that she was having doubts about being able to stick with the program, but after seeing Takeuchi's session decides that she doesn't think she can do it. Footage is shown of a Satomura/Kato match up. This of course leads to probably the most annoying aspect of the film, the fact that they enhanced some of the in ring hits to sound a lot more brutal. This may fly with non-wrestling fans, but it leads to real goofy moments where the kick that follows up a body slam sounds about 4 times louder. They interview Satomura back at the training facility in which Satomura breaks down about her fear of being a failure, which sort of strikes me as strange given the fact that she's pretty much in the position of being the young ace of the promotion. As training continues, another recruit named Sato joins the garage and

the stop watch is started on how long she'll last. Saika's test comes up, she works matches with Kato, Hirota and Satomura, which again ends up with Saika being bloodied again. Chigusa and Yuka Sugiyama, the promoter for GAEA, give their review, which is negative as they feel that Saika is giving up during the matches. The "giving up" reference may get confusing as even though the graphics say that "Takeuchi gives up" in at least one of the matches via a tap out, I think the "giving up" is that Saika is not showing enough spirit and ends up being a punching bag in a lot of the matches or just not giving it enough. Chigusa gives a furious review of Saika's performance and basically says that her tears are bullshit and slaps her around some and says that she's had enough and that she's done as Takeuchi begs to stay in the program. They allow Takeuchi to stay, but the test is enough to scare Sato into leaving. Takeuchi's second test has her facing off with Uematsu, Satomura and Chigusa. Takeuchi seems more spirited in the second test, some of her offense is hot and cold, but there's a marked improvement. The match with Chigusa is pretty brutal as Chigusa kills the hell out of her with a lariat twice, busting her up again. Chigusa still takes her to task for not fighting back enough, but in the end, it is decided that she passes and her debut match is set for Korakuen Hall on October 23 against Satomura. Prior to the debut, they interview Chigusa, who talks about her father who was in the military. Chigusa says that her father was very strict with her and she so wanted to prove herself to the point of "beating her father" by becoming a success and basically saying "see, I proved you wrong", only in not so nice terms. She basically said when people hit her, her attitude is "you bitch" and hit them right back, which is what she's trying to get from her students. Chigusa admits she's not sure if what she's doing is the best way, but that it's that attitude that got her where she was. The big day comes and they show the match while switching to shots of Takeuchi's mother and father in the audience watching the match. Takeuchi loses, but still, she gets to show a lot for a rookie and the show ends as her family and friends take a picture with her.

Overall, I thought the movie did a good job. It didn't try to do too much and dilute the story that they ended up going with. The crowd seemed into the movie as a few people popped for Takeuchi's school boy cradle that got her a 2 count on Satomura during her debut. I think it gives the people a good idea of what kind of effort and what struggles someone will go through to become a wrestler. Is it brutal at times? Yes. But given the demands that being a wrestler in Japan require, a situation like that can be expected. It's tough love. I saw situations similar (but without the slapping upside the head and maybe 1/1000 of the intensity) when I was training in the martial arts. The training has to be hard as it's obvious that they don't want to waste their time on getting someone in the ring to end up quitting on you. Whether Chigusa is right or wrong, at this point in time, she has in my opinion a lot of the promising rookies in her camp, which is something that can't be said for a lot of feds, so she must be doing something right. There were a few moments in the film where I wasn't sure if they were slightly working the film makers. I think the second test may have had some elements of that as they had the G-Panic crew there doing some footage for their show so I have some of my doubts about how authentic some of the comments may have been, but that's probably all the worked shoot BS in the US talking. I do not doubt the fact Takeuchi got potatoed in any of those matches. The draw backs would be then cranking up with the foley artists in matches and the one instance of crowd sweetening in the debut match, of course, a lot of this bugging me is probably from the fact that

I have seen these matches on tape already. The other minor low point was the subtitles. Will someone please do a documentary and letterbox it and put the subtitles in the letter box. White on white subtitles are murder. Other random stuff to watch for in the movie : the great "Mr. Softie" of bread delivery trucks which pulls up to the garage. It has a jingle and everything, the 8 million rescue animals that show up one day and appear in the second half of the film and the fact that the last lines of the GAEA Japan theme is "WE ARE FREAK-OUT! WE ARE GAEA JAPAN!"

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@#@#@#@#@# PILLMAN MEMORIAL 2000: CHRIS BENOIT vs. STEVE REGAL (ANTHONY GANCARSKI)

I went into this match having heard varying opinions about it, Some folks praised it mildly. Some folks put it between *** and ****, which, if you notice the huge gulf in folks' star ratings, means that there was nothing close to a definitive read of the match. But I'm here to tell you why, as of right now, this match should be a lock for US MOTY.

Before the bell, when the ref anachronistically checks the workers for foreign objects, you can hear a buzz and a crackle in the crowd. And why shouldn't there have been? The crowd had sat through some fair-to-middlin' indy stuff, a solid old-school match between Tim Horner and Tom Pritchard, and some forgettable stuff involving WCW workers. But Benoit and Regal had every chance to be the crown jewel of the Pillman tribute, and those in attendance knew it.

The wrestlers circled each other to start off, teasing a collar and elbow but Benoit fires off a stiff punch to Regal's cheek, They circle again, Regal with his fists balled in the least comic way you can imagine, both workers already deep into wrestling and a world away from the worlds of gimmick and promos. C&E teased again, but Regal this time gets the shot in.

Why is this opening so important, so revolutionary? We all have expectations for old-school style matches: collar and elbow lockup, rope running, chain wrestling, and then some signature spots, finish, commercial. In deviating from the established format, Benoit and Regal at once establish their debt to the great US matches of the past (Steamboat/Flair; Funk/Brisco; Rogers/O'Connor) but then go on to say that there can be something more. That there can be another chapter in the book without end that is worked professional wrestling.

The workers circle each other again. Finally the collar and elbow, a murderous lockup with both men scrambling for leverage until Benoit finally muscles Regal into a corner. As the ref works the break, Benoit keeps pushing and Regal tries his damndest to get his opponent off of him. Regal fires with some short forearms and Benoit wobbles out of the corner a bit, giving Regal some space. Benoit concedes the break, but only after a parting jab to the cheek.

C&E teased, but Benoit grabs and wrings an arm. Regal somersaults to escape, but Benoit maintains the pressure. Regal attempts a side headlock, but Benoit bears down and twists

Regal to the canvas, working the arm all the time, driving his knee into the shoulder. Regal kips up, but Benoit keeps a hold of the wrist, working the pressure points in the wrist and the carpals.

Regal with an armdrag to escape, but Benoit maintains advantage and works a hammerlock on the facedown, prone Englishman. Regal braces with his free arm to sell the leverage, and eventually regains his feet; Benoit, though, maintains the hammerlock. We are two minutes into this, and we've already established the fundamental psychology of the match: the aggressor Benoit, the putative favorite, attempting to mangle the arm of returning-to-grace Regal. Regal who could've fallen victim to the demons that have befallen so many workers before him, but who saw this match as his one last chance to be a legit, world-class, asskicking worker again.

How can you not fall in love with a match so rich in subtext? The last match so deep in meaning was Bret/Benoit, and it's fitting that the best wrestler in the world is also party to two of the most meaningful matches in our time.

Benoit still working the hammer. Regal twists out, and we're back to a standing wristlock. Regal twists out of that and scores a single-leg takedown, and wrings the wrist of a grounded Crippler. Benoit back to his feet, but Regal scores a judoesque armdrag, and presses Benoit's shoulders to the mat for a one count. To assist in the next cover, Regal jams his knee into the Canadian's collarbone. Another one count, and Benoit bridges. Regal with a knee thrust to the chest again, and you can hear the Rube Crew in the crowd grousing, and wondering if the Rock could beat up Big Show in real life.

Benoit kips up and the workers joust for leverage. Nothing here for the crowd to pop for yet, and you can tell Benoit and Regal don't care one bit. But this is far from the technically-sound work that Malenko has been accused of rendering in a vacuum; these workers know that the crowd will be rewarded if they just stick with the match. We're three minutes in.

Benoit takes Regal's knee out, and Regal is forced to the bridge position, as we get some more old-school mirroring. Regal with a kip up -- Benoit maintains his grasp on the Brit's wrists, even as Regal scores a kick to Benoit's thigh. Regal with a monkey flip; Benoit maintains his hold on Regal's wrists. Regal somersaults back, Benoit is up, and we're back to the double wristlock. Benoit lays in some headbutts, and we're back to Nitro episodes when the camera was pulled back and the action was sanitized for your protection. Not this time, though; the headbutts are as straight and lethal as a whiskey/Arsenic cocktail. Regal winces and attempts to maintain his feet; headbutt, kick, another kick. Regal grabs Benoit's foot, but Benoit comes back with an enziguri that staggers Lord Steven. A dropkick knocks him to the canvas, and Regal goes outside to catch his breath.

Benoit attempts a baseball slide, but misses. Regal doesn't miss with a high kick to Benoit's chest, though. The workers scramble up to the apron; Benoit lays some shots in, grabs Regal's head, and drives him face-first into the side of the ring. Regal is sprawled out on his backside on the arena floor. Benoit presses his advantage outside for a bit, then rolls Regal back into the ring. Lateral press for two.

Benoit with a back-suplex; another two count follows. Then a couple kicks and punches, with Regal counters with a drop-toe hold into an STF. The finish is teased, but it's too early; Benoit is too strong and he scuttles to the ropes. Regal rewards Benoit with a couple of precise short kicks from a standing position, and then pulls him up for a standing dropkick.

Single leg takedown. Regal flips Benoit over like he's one of the Godfather's hos and works him through a couple of surfboard variations. A weakened Benoit breaks. Regal attempts to press his advantage, but Benoit dodges a punch and German suplexes his opponent.

Both men splayed out on the mat. We are seven minutes in.

Benoit pulls Regal to his feet and fires off some chops; Regal retorts with a headbutt and then four severe kicks to Benoit's torso. Crippler on his ass, and a Regal chant fires up as Regal sucks wind on the ropes.

Benoit pulled up by the Brit and they exchange shots, which Benoit gets the better of. Two German suplexes chained together; Regal fires out before the third, and we get some more slobberknockin'. Regal with a double-underhook; Benoit with a block, an escape, and then a release German suplex to end the sequence.

Benoit goes up top for the headbutt; Regal intercepts him on the turnbuckle and fires him off with a double-underhook gutwrench superplex. Regal with a lateral press for a quick two, and then some more presses, and some more near-falls. Regal powers Benoit up, attempts to whip him into the corner. Benoit reverses. Regal staggers out of the corner; the wrestlers collide and butt heads. Both are down for another referee's count.

Benoit rolls over onto Regal for a two count. Then he picks the Brit up, but Regal ducks behind and rolls Benoit up for two. Then an attempted backslide and a release suplex, each with their own near falls. Regal fires off some shots, and attempts a tombstone; Benoit reverses. Top rope headbutt misses, and both men are prone.

Both workers up at 8. They work a couple standing switches and then Benoit comes back with a released German suplex. Regal is dazed; Benoit capitalizes and locks on the Crippler Crossface. Regal taps out instantaneously.

After the match, Benoit needs a number of attempts to gain his feet. Regal, meanwhile, lies motionless on the mat. Benoit checks on him to make sure he's well, and -- amidst a deafening Regal chant -- Benoit helps Regal to his feet.

Final thoughts: people like to proclaim old-school rasslin dead, like PWCrotch.com's Jason Powell and a bunch of others. Many folks reading this very review don't get old-school wrestling, don't understand that for wrestling to have a future beyond that of bullshit spectacle, it has to be rooted in legit-seeming, life-and-death conflict. This match augurs well for the future of the art of

wrestling; when the wrestling boom ends, when the spotfest heroes and the garbage practitioners are all crippled up somewhere, when there are 1500 people even at WWF shows, folks like Regal and Benoit make the statement that for there to be a new-school, it must be rooted in the old. For an artform to matter, it can't be rooted in a vacuum.

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\$\$\$&\$\$&\$\$&\$\$ NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING TV- 10/9/2000- TOKYO DOME
(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Toshiaki Kawada vs Kensuke Sasaki:

The first two times I saw it I thought this was... like... Match of The Millennium- then I remembered that Tanya Tucker vs Glen Campbell also happened in what is technically this millennium. Plus World War I and II and the American Civil War and what have you. But I digress. As for this match, it was pretty much hell-fire and hurricanes of stiffness- with Kawada and Sasaki beating the living fuck out of each for 15 minutes. At first it seems REALLY straight forward- a kind of Ode to Hashimoto vs Tenryu 1998 standing slugfest in thier own Ode to stiffness. Upon further inspection it's actually a lot more complex than this nearest predecessor. Hash/ Tenryu was hellishly stiff and the most straightforward ass-kicking-based match in New Japan since Vader beat the fuck out of Inoki. Hash/Tenryu works because they kept it one-dimensional and intense. This match matches that intensity but adds more elements from All Japan to make it a formalistically superior match but also matches it's closest predecessors in sheer amount of horrendous violence. I actually like a lot more Sasaki matches than most people. I think he gets lumped in the no-selling shitty New Japan heavyweights category too often when- in actuality- he has had a couple a decent matches when he shouldn't have (I like his title defenses against Muta and, to a lesser degree, Nishimura) but Sasaki IS what you can call a "limited" worker- sorta like Buddy Ryan was a "limited" football coach. Sasaki CAN work amazingly stiff though and that's all the magnificent Kawada needs to make this one of the best PURE New Japan Heavyweight matches you'll ever see. Kawada is on a mission here- he understands that the New Japan Heavyweight style COULD have been the predominant All Japan style if Misawa had half a brain and could look credible without snapping people's spinal chords. Kawada knows that a simplification of the Psychology and a simplification of moves can still create a compelling match and HERE he gets his big chance to prove it. In front of a sold out Tokyo Dome, against a wrestler who hasn't had a great match in five years, Kawada pulls the trigger and shows that HE is the true money player in Puroresu. Kawada understands the basis of the style- the moves are big, the story is simple, the stiffness level is high- it's a perfect setting for Kawada, the All Japan purveyor of said tenets of wrestling. That being said, it should also be unnerving to Choshyu that Kawada can come in and have- in his first try- the most perfect match in the style Choshyu has based his promotion on. It doesn't say much for Manabu Nakanishi and Hiroshi Tenzan, who have had five years to figure the style out and can't muster 1/100 of this match. The key is that Kawada understands the basis of selling and the level of selling neccessary to make it work as a wrestling match and how to make it work as a New Japan Heavyweight match. By instilling the better part of the first thing, he automatically creates the second. The New Japan simple match idea starts out of early in the first three

minutes as Kawada goes into a collar and elbow with Sasaki and Sasaki powers out and they go back into a collar and elbow tie up. The crowd pops big for a missed knife-edge chop by Sasaki- as Sasaki goes for the big move while Kawada looks to be going for the All Japan slow build by going into the headlock. Sasaki powers out, gets his own headlock and gets shot into the ropes and hits a shoulder block for the next big pop. Kawada starts the level of selling HERE, establishes the value of every strike from that shoulderblock for the crowd to gauge everything else against for the rest of the match and- having done this- says, "It'S ON , Motherfucker." The All Japan slow build tease is over as they just start fricking way-laying each other. The savage brutality of the beating puts it in the realm of selling that blows the standard New Japan level of selling out of the water. Whereas Sasaki, when in with your basic Road Warrior Hawk-based NJ Heavyweight would pop up after a lariat because he is so superhumanly powerful- when in reality he is showing that illogical wrestling where selling isn't based on ANYTHING CONSTANT sucks dick- here he is following the lead of Kawada. The All Japan aspect of this very New Japan sprint of a match is that the cumulative selling of moves is foreign to New Japan, but both Sasaki and Kawada instill it into this match. The math of an All Japan is replaced by the NEW math of this match- Replace cumulative head-crushing with cumulative strikes, kicks and lariats- and add in a new element of working towards an ACTUAL finisher. The logical clockwork psychology of Kawada and the subtlety he brings to this slaughterhouse of a match is pretty awe-inspiring. Kawada establishes a basis against which the crowd can measure each strike and move and they both sell to that basis and the crowd accepts the story. Then, Kawada establishes the superficial story to take the crowd to the finish. Here it is inferred that Sasaki needs to hit his Northern Lights Bomb to win. Kawada needs to hit the right running high Kick. The match is then divided into three sections and each directs the match to the final race to the finish- a simpler formula than your classic All Japan match, but a deeper idea for a New Japan Heavyweight match. The start of the match is Sasaki getting more cumulative damage through chops- as he hits astoundingly stiff chops on Kawada until Kawada can get the transition and get a large accumulation of kicks to counteract the damage. The selling of the chops and amazing amount of punishment therein is at a level of selling that is basically no-selling at first, but then you see the cumulative effect and it makes sense. THIS effect is what Choshyu has always wanted in his Heavyweight matches but none of his roided out monsters have the wrestling savvy to pull it off- because they can't ever ACTUALLY SELL and it comes off as just shitty no-selling at worst or just really scattershot psychology at best. Here, Kawada takes Choshyu favorite roid monster and shows him EXACTLY how to make it work. The match then goes into the middle section of submissions as Kawada kicks the holy fuck out of Sasaki to get him in position for the Stretch Plum. Sasaki counters out and REALLY KICKS THE HOLY MOTHERFUCK out of Kawada to get two nearfalls with a Lariat and Powerbomb to set up his Scorpion Deathlock. Now that both of these two have been put in a submission hold foreign to them in their careers before this match (as main event wrestlers anyway), the finish is simply who has the most left after the two levels of sheer ass-stomp has been established. The first two parts were comparable and equal ass-beatings with each setting up the final flurry of who has the most fighting spirit left and shit. They go back to the beginning, stand face to face and take turns beating the holy fuck out of each other- Sasaki is stronger, Kawada has better technique; Sasaki has more left in the tank, Kawada is craftier in fighting. They hit a deadlock as Kawada responds to a FUCKING HEAD-RIPPING LARIAT by

Sasaki by kicking Sasaki right in the face before they both collapse. After a double lariat 8 count, Sasaki goes for the kill by going for the Northern Lights Bomb but Kawada has effectively worn him down enough for Kawada to block the move and Sasaki collapse from the effort. Sasaki collapses and Kawada kicks him in the face when he gets to his feet. Kawada then zeroes in for the kill with three highkicks to the back of the head. Sasaki does the Misawa-variation of blocking the finishing kick with a lariat to the shin like Misawa would block with an Elbow Smash, but it is too little too late as Kawada CRUSHES Sasaki's skull with the final kick, sprawling desperately to get the three count. This was about as great a match as you can pull off in such a huge place, as almost every move is just fucking gigantic. It took a thousand viewings of this match to figure out just how much of this great New Japan style match was actually a very cool mutation of a great All Japan match. One key is that the finish was final and built to a New Japan-style simple finish and that makes it was far superior to the drawn out preposterous Five Dozen Finisher finishes that was driving me away from late 90s All Japan. The perfect mutation of both styles is synthesized effortlessly first time out by Kawada and I cannot wait for him to breath life into every other match he has in New Japan. This match is fucking great.

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@#@#@# All Pro Wrestling - Internet Tournament 2000
(PHIL SCHNEIDER)

Watched an Internet tourney the way God intended over the Internet, pretty good stuff without the hideous overbooking that has plagued APW as of late

Myaki Franz vs. Vinny Massaro:

Myaki is a highspotty rookie, who is a hell of an athlete but is still learning how to wrestle. He debuted a couple of months before this match against Massaro in a spectacular but flawed match, this is the rematch, and it is not as crazy, but is closer to a wrestling match then a spot exhibition. Massaro is in full rudo mode as he does a good job selling all of Massaros crazy lucha armdrags. Massaro sells for a lot of this occasionally punctuating the match with a super stiff forearm. Massaro also hits a nice tope-con-hilo and a Great Sasuke style kill-my-self-more-then-I-kill-my-opponent Asai moonsault. The end is really great as Massaro kills Franz with a Air Raid Crusher and a off the hook Steiner Screwdriver.

"Fallen Angel" Christopher Daniels vs. Jardi Franz:

Franz may be the most improved wrestler of the year. In 1999 he was a highspot machine with very little straight wrestling ability and a tendency to blow spots. He has really stepped it up in the last six months, becoming a suprisingly proficient mat wrestler and raising the level on his highspots. Daniels is on of the best wrestlers in the world, and is a supurb base for a highflyer like Franz. They break out some nice mat wrestling to start, and then move into some swift counter sequences. Franz's highspots include a springboard tope-con-hilo and a wall walk. He also broke out a sweet rocker dropper counter to a powerbomb. Daniels looked crisp as always, breaking out a really nice looking snap suplex kip up and finsihing off Franz with a Last Rights. Could have used some more time, but was a very good match.

"Fallen Angel" Christopher Daniels vs. Vinny Massaro:

These guys are two of the most complex workers in the indies. Daniels is a master of complex counter sequences and Massaro is almost as proficient. They started with some mat wrestling, which was highlighted by a super fast go-behind by Massaro, showing nice agility for such a chubbied out cat. Massaro worked over the arm, including rope walk legdrop which was slightly preposterous but kind of neat. Daniels took over with a dropkick to the knee, he then channels Minoru Tanaka and breaks out all of his freaky kneebars, including a prawn hold rolled into a kneebar and a reverse roll up into a kneebar. The also did a couple of Danielsy counter sequences, Daniels tries a pildriver- Massaro counters into an air raid crusher attempt- Daniels counters into a roll up. Massaro can tend to get a little NOVAish or Kanyonastic, where he will rather show a bunch of new moves then wrestle a match, but he kept his innovations to a minimum in this match and just worked, and this was probably the best singles match of his career. You want all of this.

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\$\$%\$%\$% ZIPANG- 4/4/2000- "CROSSROADS!"

(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Zipang is really funtastic- with vastly variable match quality but a unified code of goofiness that delights me. Plus they appear to be wrestling in the same carpetted casino-like place that housed all those Herb Abrams UWF cards so I can always hope for the Power Twins to come out and have it out with Sandy Beach and Tom Brandi. The young turk of fucked up and obscure wrestling the world over- Scott Mailman- supplied the indie goofy fun. WOO-HOO!

Karas vs. Yasaku

Yasaku is the beefy heavyweight from DDT/Capture International whose twin brother Diasaku doesn't actually look like him. Karas is the Hayabusa long-nosed mask guy that will not stay off my tapes as of late. They are both good little workers. This match fearlessly sucks a hogleg when it shouldn't have- considering that I've seen both of these guys in crappy Japanese indie matches where they elevated the match to something good or at least watchable. Instead, this was the New Millenium version of that ageless classic from WAR. Let's go back to DVDVR #61 and relive the first time this Archtype Match was executed: "Osamu Tachihikari vs BattleRanger- This is from the otherside, the dark, hoary side of the WAR promotion. Battle Ranger is a good little quasi-lucha flyer. Tachihikari is the most lumbering of the faceless lumbering WAR heavyweights. Add it all up and you get a WAR heavyweight match without the other lumbering heavyweight, replaced instead by a little guy who can work selling for a clumsy galoot who doesn't sell. BOY! This ain't good." The difference is that while I'm guessing that Yasaku is at the same level of experience as OSAMU~~! was AT THIS JUNCTURE, Yasaku is a WHOLE LOT better than Tachihikari. On the flipside, Caras is no BattleRanger. Battle Ranger was fun and nifty and even more drenched in indie sleaze. Either way, Karas gets in one Asai Moonsault and couple of kicks and a whole bunch of knife-edge chops and lariats that go as unsold as a row of tickets for Starrcade 2000. THIIIISSSS

SSSSSSUUUUUUCCCCCKKKKSSSS. Grace Asano was the ref though, so there is a big Pathetic International Crush thing going on here for you lonely hearts at home.

Yoshiya Yamashita/ Yuji Kito vs. Masked Falcon/ Lucky Boy:

I'm excited. I get excited sometimes about the Professional Wrestling. I almost always get excited when someone named Masked Falcon decides to throw in with a wrestler named Lucky Boy. 777 on his back and he is a lucky boy indeed, it would seem. Lucky turns to GHASTLY horror as it seems that IWA boy, Yamashita, that I'll championed as being "trained by Tortuga... probably; and thus IMMENIENTLY worthy of top 500 consideration" has decided to take his brilliant training by the world's best Japanese Knock-Off Of A Gimmick That Was Already Dated 12 Years Ago- lost Ninja Turtle the crotchshotastic TORTUGA- and thrown the shit in the street! Actually, I'm too hard on Yamashita- it's just that his offense is super lowgrade and he blows spots at the end and he does the Locomotion Snapmare which is SOOOO 1998. Lucky is all about the comedy spots and does these cool spazzoid headbutts like he is having a stroke in mid diving headbutt. The spot where he runs the ropes and does a backwards shoulderblock while waving to the crowd as if to say, "Greetings! I am wrestling but I have time to acknowledge you" is quite adorable and goofy in a Gamera Subplot Robot way. Kito and Falcon are the meat of the match as they do all the stiffer stuff. I dunno. This is a lot of wrestling moves executed competently, but they needed to work towards some kind of climax. Two Kamikazes in one match say that these four need to watch 6 hours of the Armstrong Brothers on tape before they can attempt to wrestle another tag match. YEEKS!

Nise Onita/ Kikuzawa vs. Ichiro Yaguchi/ Nise Yagushi

Kikuzawa is the meat that keeps the ZIPANG-DDT-WESTERN JAPAN-EAGLE PRO axis of wrestling together. He is the all around good little worker that can make a match with three astoundingly marginal workers like these three bozos approach the Japanese Indie Promise Land of "Nearly Watchable" status. Nise Yagushi comes out with Actual Yaguchi and it's funny. Yaguchi is now a really big fat hog and his Nise is Jennifer Anniston Thin so it looks like Yaguchi is doing a nouvelle Christian avante-gard venquiloquism act. Nise Onita is all about Nise Offense and hits Nise clotheslines. Nise translates to "fake" and I think it's like the Hawaiian word "aloha"- in that it can also mean "suck". Or it should. These Nises suck and they suck on the Onita Pro stuff. Nise Onita has cancer so I will leave him alone now. Meanwhile, Nise Yaguchi will take a GIGANTIC ass-kicking to rationalize his own existence as a Nise. But he also throws the worst punches by anyone ever trained to wrestle in Japan. PERHAPS Ed Leslie did some kind of clinic at the Yaguchi Famous Wrestler Dojo- it was the "Punches, BROTHER!: the Leslie method to Big time Success In Sports Entertainment" seminar lecture hall "c". Either way, I'm proud to announce that, yes, WE HAVE A NEW KING OF SHITTY PUNCHES! He is Nise Yaguchi and you will go, "Awww FUCK YOU with THAT!" when you see them. I'm hoping that I'm wrong- as I would wish this fate upon no fellow brother or sister on this beautiful planet of love we call "the World"- but Nise Yagushi has eternal shitty Japanese no-talent blood-sucking freak written all over him- a future Nakamaki in the making. And you were there on the groundfloor. When the Nises lock-up, I weep horrible tears of hate. Hate for me. Hate for life. Hate. C'mon, I'm your pal- send me quality controlled narcotics so I can forget this match ever entered my life experience. Please.

Congo the Dark Knight vs. Heaven:

Heaven is fun and will die for ya! Gotta love THAT! Dead Dead Dead! Owie Owie Owie! He is wearing Antifaz Midnight Blue tights instead of the BALLS OUT Daisy Dukes that say "WHO COULD BE MORE OF A MANNNN THAN MEEEEEE?!?!?" Thus it's a mixed bag from the getgo with the one who would be Heaven. Congo The Dark Knight is such a cool name. He's a shitty wrestler. Does a lot of kicks and grounds the whole middle of the match and never allows Heaven to attempt to escape this mortal coil via hignspot gone horribly wrong so I cannot love this section of the Heaven Canon of Ligament Ripping Highspotfests. He does hit a nice Tope Con Hilo and nice Barrell Roll Senton off the top rope. Heaven has the super fun Triple Wiggly Dizzyboy Neckbreaker for a finisher so there is nothing to hate here. Just nothing spectacular enough to make you want to see it.

Adachi vs. Black Heaven:

Adachi is a mystery. Right when I want to write him off as an annoying Rob Van Dam of super Low Budget Japanese Independent Wrestling, he'll go have a perfect lucha sequence like the opening of this match. I mean, Adachi has some armdrags that are to DIE for and he seems to have a real knack for lucha stylings. From there, Black Heaven- who is a pretty good shake in the lucha department- takes it straight to the mat, as these two have a slight clue as to how to put a match together. Black Heaven makes with the lowgrade offence after getting the offensive and Adachi droptoeholds his way to ruining some classic Mexican submissions as he does the worst variation on a Pendulum Hold you will ever see. After getting in some pretty stiff kicks, he does the irritating rope walking spot. JET FREEZER~! makes a run-in, hitting Adachi with a Springboard Bulldog and Black Heaven goes finisher wacky as DOUBLE FOULES lead to SUPER KICKS and Adachi hits a cool as fuck off the apron rope assisted Senton in to the ring for two and a DOUBLE SPRINGBAORD MOONSAULT for two. Jet FREEZER~! and the LEGION OF DARKNESS cheat like motherfuckers and get the transition of pure evil and four Kanyonized Powerbombs later has Black Heaven getting the duke and applying the stompdwn. They beat Adachi's ass for a while and the faces all get smeared as they try to make the save until surprise run-in- ASIAN COUGAR!- makes the actual save- crushing Heaven (who is as evil as Black Heaven, it turns out!!) with an Apron Legdrop! WOO-HOO!

The Main event was perfectly fine wrestling with Adachi doing more good than irritating, but lemme tell you, beloved reader- this ain't ZIPANG you want. Keep reading.

~!~

ZIPANG-7/19/2000- "NON-STOP PASSION!"
(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Who Am I/ JET FREEZER vs. Naoshi Sano/ Yoshiya Yamashita

GOD! Where can I begin to START with the love for the disparate throughly fucked-up elements of this match. Who Am I is a white guy in a Hawaiian shirt who has LOST HIS MEMORY! SO HE HAS TO WRESTLE TO FURTHER THE EVIL DESIGNS OF THE LEGION OF

DARKNESS!! JET FREEZER~! is his handler and has to convince Who AM I to take the vicious Gaijin Who Looks Like A 7-11 Counter Clerk Attack to the cuddly Naoshi Sano and the maligned Yamashita. Sano- who is used to trying to get a handle on gimmick wrestlers gone haywire by always being on every SPWC card ever, REALIZES that Who Am I is just as likely to help the forces of good as easily as he will help the forces of evil but decides to just start beating on the lost tourist for kicks. Yamashita looks perfectly fine doing the same. JET FREEZER~! is kicky and low-end offensively, but his ASTOUNDING TO INFINITY mask carries the match. Yamashita gets the pin and the forces of Heaven's Legion Of Darkness corral WHO AM I and try to get him settled down enough to get him to the back. You probably need to just watch this to understand it. And it gets even more fucked up and weird later. The wrestling is very a-okay. Naoshi is a good lil worker.

Kana Misaki vs. Tsubasa Kuragaki

HEY! It's the Ladies of JWP. Misaki used to be Motoya back in the day and she is cute as living breathing hell. Kuragaki looks like one of the Chigusa Nagayo Girls From Brazil clones. She's kinda thick and powerful but throws good dropkicks. I've lost track of the JWP gals pretty completely since they've lost television and it's weird to see Misaki on a ZIPANG card when I figured she'd be spearheading a big youth resurgence in Joshi. It seems JWP took the biggest hit when it came to the near collapse of of Joshi. Motoya was the second or third best youngster JWP had and she was the hottest looking. Now I don't know where they run or who they draw or anything. As for this match, it's pretty much Joshi by numbers but with Kuragaki blowing a bunch of stuff. The Endless finishers part is kept to a reasonable amount as Misaki hits a cool Senton, a Super Cool Front Chancery Suplex and UD La Majistral variation for the pin. Kuragaki did a neato Backslide into a Bridge that was not enough to save the parts that she blew, so I can't give this match the love that I want to. Kana Misaki needs to get snapped up by GAEA already.

NOZAWA/ Mitsanobu Kikuzawa vs Arkangel del Muerte/ Starman

Golly! NOZAWA is really improved immensely since the underwhelming introduction I got to him on the CMLL Japan tape, where he wrestled as Super Cacao and the brief appearance in the DDT Junior Tournament. He is all intense and super on the Lucha tip now. He is much less tentative and far more dynamic. NOZAWA and Kikuzawa are TOKYO GURENTAI~! and they are up for the challenge of two of my fave EMLL midcarders ever- Arkangel- he of the honeycomb design on the back of his outfit, and Starman- who used to be called Ultraman Jr and who can take it to the mat in an Old School Lucha way like a Old School mutha fukka will. NOZAWA makes with the comedy early as he complains to Grace every time Starman hits an armdrag- saying that his Mexican opponent is pulling all areas of his hair and facial hair. After that they go to mat hitting a few dozen reversals and then they have an extended armdrag clinic so I am losing my fucking mind because I really LOVE that kinda shit. ArkAngel and Kikuzawa take it straight to the mat- with each trading kneebars, working up to armabars leading to RUDO Kikuzawa kicking and punching to offense. NOZAWA and Starman go back to the coolest armdrags they can think of, all adding up to a Quebradora by Starman driving NOZAWA out to the floor leading to Arkangel and Kikuzawa topping their counterparts armdrag clinic- as Kikuzawa accents his armdrags with a SUPER cool ass Old School flying head scissors and

Arkangel TOPPING HIM by hitting a Near-Pantera level Floatover-Into-A-Baseball-Slide armdrag. I am now suitably freaked out. ARKANGEL RULES. I'm thinking that since Arkangel is in the weird position of being tecnico, he gets to do all the offense that he never gets to do- as he does all the quebrada variations including a superswank Quebrada elbow. NOZAWA hits a counter Lariat to get back on offense and hits a beautiful Kaz Hayashi Vertical Tope. Starman and Kikuzawa counter with the toprope diving armdrag into the MORTAL~! into a pose and Arkangel goes into his rudo powermode- beating young NOZAWA into submission. Starman and Arkangel then become Arena Mexico Midnight Express hitting the slam into a Senton, the double dropkicks to the face and the dickish dropkick in the Camel Clutch. NOZAWA escapes by hitting two dropkicks on Arkangels knee and Kikuzawa comes in to get RUDOIZED! ArkAngel and Starman do every double team move they can remember and all of them rule. They get to the Double Leglock into the Crawling Through Double Pin spot in case there was any question about the Luchaness of the match and match is slowing down quickly. Before the finish kicks in we have a full-blown Star but now third set of wrestlers to fill in the middle so it is the spot diminished. ArkAngel and Starman start the highspot train to lead to the finish with Arkangel hitting a Lizmark Old School Piscada, Starman with the Tope Con Hilo and NOZAWA with Barrel Roll Piscada. The finishes start as NOZAWA hits a king-sized Released German for two and the Backslide for two. Arkangel starts hitting Liger Bombs for two. They then go MEMPHIS with it, as Kikuzawa attempts to bash Arkangel with the tag belts, Starman intercepts and gets the belt, misses NOZAWA and hits Arkangel, DOUBLE SCHOOL BOYZ and you the Midsouth Coliseum pops like monkeys! This was the best Arkangel has looked in a while and I love NOZAWA now. This was good and fun like Lucharesu should be. The fact that each team clearly switched from Rudo to Technico twice in the match made it stylistically confusing, but the good outweigh any bad, I'd say- as I enjoyed this match quite a bit.

Adachi/ Asian Cougar/ Masked Falcon vs. Heaven/ Extraterrestrial Life/ Yoshida
Extraterrestrial comes out in some kind of oversized poptart wrapper and you freak out like a monkey. Heaven unleashes him and he has one of those gloriously taped together get-ups that I absolutely adore because it is SOO fun- what with the tinfoil space suit to the Big Daddy Roth Channels Eiger After Developing A Neurological Disorder mask. Yoshida is the secret underground keeper in this match. He is rocking with the high-flying and has the Poor Man's Yuji Yasaraoka outfit that screams "WHAT?! HUNH?". Heaven is FINALLY showing off his Big Business in his tiny Daisy Dukes and he and Masked Falcon fearlessly do some wrestling. Extraterrestrial Life (who I am 78% sure is a Lucky Boy) makes with the comedy jokes, which is fine because it IS actually a SPWC-level weird-ass gimmick where ETL walks around in hand wiggling alieness and tries to be all alien and unorthodox in the ring. The problem is that this is a pretty straight approximation of Lucha match and ETL is paired up with the divine Asian Cougar- thus making this less wrestlerific and more funny as they are married for the rest of the match, which ISN'T good- but luckily they break it up before the end and the flyers meet the flyers. Adachi and Heaven go through all of Adachi's more annoying spots early and make with the funniest moment of the night- in a Three Stooges Do Zipang kinda way- as they hit a double foule and pogo around for a few minutes in comically groinular agony. Yoshida hits the Double Springboard Quebrada off the toprope like a thinner, pimplier Silver King, but it can't save him from the La Tapitia-esque and Gorrie-Special-drenched stylings of Masked Falcon. Asian

Cougar gets a moment of daylight as he is tagged in against Yoshida and he gets all of his Leg-droppy offense in. Yoshida hits a Double Springboard Dropkick and Double Springboard Plancha to the floor as Asian Cougar becomes ONE with the HEAT SEGMENT~! Heaven does some midgrade power moves to make way for a second foray of Yoshida vs Asian Cougar with Yoshida getting crushed by the over-the-toprope Legdrop and the Diving Senton to the floor. Yoshida and Masked Falcon start the high spots of Hot Death with MORE Double Springboard Planchas by Yoshida and a FUCKING BEAUTIFUL Tope Con Hilo by Asian Cougar. Extraterrestrial Life does the very alien Spud Webb no hands springboard Plancha that was pretty nifty for a guy who I'm assuming can't see anything at all in that get up. The finish is pretty great as ETL gets a very Earth-based Liger Bomb on Adachi but starts spinning in a circle BECAUSE HE'S FROM OUTERSPACE! thus setting up the perfect opportunity for a super kick by Adachi. A jillion other finishers on the pathetic little fella from outer Space then ensues- as he first has to contend with the new atmosphere and then has to contend with being asked to put the Ace Of Zipang over in a community center in some anonymous Prefecture in rural Japan. Post match, the Army Of Darkness and the Army Of Light beat the crap out of each other and we all win. Get this tape. It's really fun and has the superstars of tomorrow (NOZAWA, Kikuzawa, Asian Cougar, Yoshida, Naoshi Sano, and don't forget JET FREEZER~!) on it. Plus, you can NEVER get too much Arkangel del la Muerte.

~!~

%^%^%^%^ ZIPANG- 8/14/00- "FEARLESS SUMMER".

(DEAN RASMUSSEN)

Naoshi Sano/ Masked Falcon vs. JET FREEZER/ Who Am I:

When we had last left WHO AM I, he was being menaced by JET FREEZER~! and Heaven's Army Of Darkness. Here, his resistance to JET FREEZER~! is even more pronounced and NOW is the time for Naoshi Sano to use his keen skill to Control All Gimmicks and turn WHO AM I against the Army Of Darkness. Naoshi and JET~! go at it tooth and nail at the beginning- with neither being able to get the armbar. JET~! cheats and gets Sano to the corner and, reluctantly, WHO AM I tags in! This is where Naoshi talks WHO AM I into BREAKING FREE of JET FREEZER~! and the diabolical Army Of Heaven! WHO AM I turns on JET~! and spends the remainder of the match wandering about the building, trying to stay away from the rest of the Army Of Darkness. Meanwhile JET~! enjoys the ass-kicking that only a betrayed heel can enjoy. WHO AM I wanders in and out of camera range wearing a different Mask from the Army Of Darkness every time. Sano uses this time to mack on the always alluring Grace, all in the name of distracting her from the endless double team of JET but the undercurrent of love and admiration is SEETHING just below the surface- WAITING for the macig of love to begin! Heaven finally corrals WHO AM I and makes him tag back in. WHO AM I has a sack of batteries or something that Heaven gave him and he is supposed to hit Masked Falcon with it, but WHO AM I isn't interested in a life of evil and Masked Falcon takes the sack away and attempts to hit JET with it, but Falcon misses and hits WHO AM I with it. This is the BEGINNING of I AM CODY's self-realization and reacclimation of his memory and the first step to continuing his career as an inexplicable white guy in the most obscure Japanese Indie on the face of the earth. I truly adore ZIPANG.

El Consadole vs. FM Taro:

El Consadole is a bird and the ladies bring him bird seeds before the match and he eats it. This match takes a chance that the audience will be in the SPIRIT to go along with the whimsey as Consadole and Fighting Machine TARO spend half the match doing Puroresu Charlie Chaplain routines as Consadole is a dual role of opponent/pet bird. That makes it balls out and really weird. It made me think that I should do the same in this review. I should take a chance and hope that the audience is in the right SPIRIT. Hell, if you've read through THREE ZIPANG reviews, I owe you a part of my soul for reading about six hours of wrestling that you will probably never see. FM TARO gets face heat for also eating birdseeds from the ladies at ringside. He is a good looking young man and the ladies are charmed as was the rest of the audience. I myself worry about what I'm doing with my life sometimes. I've done it my way at least. Or at least I think I've done it my way. I think I'm a pretty big pussy a lot of times because I will lose whole years of my life on stupid things. FM Taro does this great thing of luring Consadole off his perch with birdseeds and when the birdman is whimsically pecking at the seeds, Fighting Machine dropkicks him in the head. The look on his face is priceless as he tries mitigate the barrages of boo's with a look of "C'mon! I'm a good enough guy! It's a wrestling match! I have to wrestle!" and the crowd is even more enraptured in the match. I lost three years waiting tables, three years printing t-shirts- overlapped by five years of an OBVIOUSLY dead-end relationship that I fought like a motherfucker to keep together, eventhough I knew it was REALLY hurting both of us. I would mitigate it all by playing in bands and- since that was a fluke dream I had when I was a child that somehow came true- would give me the power to continue the more pathetic self-destructive tendencies I stupidly championed in my mind. The crowd goes really apeshit as Consadole does a Diving Headpeck and pecks his way out of the corner. The pecking is unexpected by your reviewer and I was baffled and delighted. Even to this day, I try to make sense of my twenties. I think I was kinda happy being free from 25 to 27 because I felt a whole lot of loneliness and desperation but it made me more alive for it. When your lonely and gone to seed and no longer thought of as a sexual entity, the feeling of being pariah is rejuvenating and cleansing for a while. When the thrill of being a hideous shocking freak wears off and your left alone staring at a bottle of some shitty beer you can't even afford anymore because you've squandered every single ounce of talent god has given you in some foggy quest to be "free"- you realize the price that you've paid. I wasn't cool- I was just fat and drunk and an asshole. Then I would screw my manhood to the sticking place and come up with somekind of "living life intuitively is more fulfilling than discipline and regimentation" bullshit to make it through the times of hollow horrible moments of stinging clarity amidst the daily grind. I'm realizing now that to live THAT intuitively would require a boatload more moxy than I have stored away. I do take comfort in the fact that though I was far too much of a pussy to live as riotously as a true prodigal son would, and I didn't have enough of a good time to justify the disappointment I've caused my mother and family and friends, I do have a couple hundred good stories I can tell and I was a really good source of comic relief for dear friends who were in similar existentially mind-fucking straits. Either way, I'm married now and have amazingly beautiful children. My job is perfect in that I am a strawboss- so I can't fire anyone, I'm still in charge, and I'm not actual formal management- so I have the some benefits and some of the pay of managemnet without having to have a weird working relationship with my

co-workers for the most part. I figured if I had completely played it straight, I'd be making 15,000 more a year, probably would hate myself more and have even more regrets than just what I have now- mostly being too overweight to attract all the women I should have slept with. And that last part is just me being a big fat whiny crybaby because I've had more intense, mystical, passionate experiences with true women of strength or women of haunting vulnerability and irresistible combinations and variations of the two, so much so that any regret about not having more is an insult to the ones who told herself that she loved me at one time and then gave me insight into the last mystery an adult can begin to try to solve. To hell with me. FM Taro kicks the Birdman in the head with a Superkick and charm and whimsy of the moment give way to the rest of the night.

Congo the Dark Knight vs. Yoshiya Yamashita

Congo the Dark Knight isn't whatcha call very good. His finisher is the Claw and he does a really pooppy Nodawa. Yamashita is redeemed himself in my eyes but this match still sucks it sideways.

Asian Cougar/Adachi/Yoshida vs. Heaven/Extraterrestrial Life/Giant Watermelon Head

Any match with both Extraterrestrial Life AND Giant Watermelon Head automatically starts off with an Andromeda-level amount of stars from the get go. The fact that Giant Watermelon Head has the most indecipherably nebulous gimmick makes for a Crab Nebula of stars. The fact that Extraterrestrial Life has a Frank Frazzetta-inspired physique painted on his costume (a sort of Mr Goodbody of Aquilonia) makes this already the greatest match in the history of our sport! Ring the bell already! Giant Watermelon head has this three-tiered headdress that takes two people to hold up as he makes his way to the ring. The mask underneath is like Halloween's- but it's a Watermelon. And Giant Watermelon Head isn't gonna do a Tope Con Hilo to Nowhere for your pleasure. Watermelon Head does do the eternal happy boy dance that his Mexican Vegetation-Based Masked Counterpart has never done- so it all equals out, sorta. He is a big fat guy who does lotsa clotheslines too, so he's definately no Halloween! REALLY! The MEAT of the match is ETL- who is more of a worker and less of a gimmick in this match, as the painted on muscles propel him to workingdom. The BIGGEST MEAT of the match is Heaven and Asian Cougar ripping up the motherfucking house like TRUE KINGZ! as Asian Cougar is just fuggin AWESOME and Heaven tries to hang with him, so it's all good. Giant Watermelon Heads fights his urge to go to the mat with Adachi and continues his chop-based offense so the yucks keep coming. It all leads up to a big Tope Con hilo Part 2 Highspot train and it rox! The finish is super-extended as they set up a bunch of ways to pummel ETL- including Adachi getting him in a Mexican Pendulum Hold while Asian Cougar does a Springbaord Legdrop across his head. The finish is finally Asian Cougar hitting the prettiest Straitjacket German Suplex you'll ever see- as ETL once again is the ZIPANG! whipping boy. This match is super fantastically sleazily fun. Asian Cougar rules and ZIPANG is stuff you want if you like your wrestling super goofy 24-7 and sometimes good in the ring. Oh yeah!

~!~

WRESTLER OF THE WEEK: BRET HART

BRET HART vs CHRIS BENOIT; Monday, October 4th, 1999- (DEAN RASMUSSEN):
(When Schneider said that we should do Bret Hart for Wrestler Of The Week, Tony suggested that I reprint the review of the Nitro Benoit/Bret match from the last Monday Nitro Workrate report worth writing. Here it is.)

Chris Benoit and Bret Hart have the Match Of The Year on free TV and wonks can dispute the technical points when compared Match Of The Year Candidate X and they will all lose in my eyes because this match was so phenomenal and gets more phenomenal each time you watch it- simply because there is so much story injected into this. The KEY to this match is the understanding of what this match was- a vision and a lament of what Bret Hart assumed wrestling would become, as this became a rockhard story seeped in real life emotion with two master artists expressing their sorrow through a sullen determination to show in one match all that is good in their shared perspective of wrestling: wrestling that is seeped in traditional forms and structures, masterfully showing how a match is crafted while at the same time infusing the piece with state of the art wrestling moves, man-sized stiffness, man-sized selling, man-sized psychology- actual fucking KING-SIZED professional wrestling as filtered through the basic tenets of the Hart Dungeon. This is what US Pro Style SHOULD have become in 1990 after the end of the Flair/Steamboat era. This is Bret Hart saying so IN THE RING and it you cannot get ANY cooler than THAT. The backstory of this match is just coming out and it adds to the already rich tapestry of the match: Bret was given the option to wrestle in the same arena where his brother died- who died while working for a man that betrayed Bret Hart and whom Bret Hart thoroughly despises. Instead of doing what I would have done if it were my brother- which is try to distance myself from the emotional trauma of that situation until I could cope with the wellspring of feelings of love for my brother and the hatred of whom I would consider the one responsible for his death, instead Bret Hart decides to make his art his catharsis and decides to show the world what his wrestling heritage is and he decides to show what his family was capable of producing as he wrestles it's greatest graduate- Chris Benoit. The backstory continues as Bret Hart requests to put over Chris Benoit to the WCW, which is nixed by the WCW brass. This is key to the understanding of this match because one can see that Bret knows what Benoit is- Benoit is the one who has to embody the pinnacle of the Hart style and tradition after Bret is through with the sport. Even when Owen was alive, Bret knew that Owen's knees would prevent him from reaching the pure wrestling artform pinnacle that he was capable of reaching, thus Bret Hart wants to put over the real heir to the Hart Family domination of TRUE WRESTLING. This match reaches vastly cool proportions even before the bell rings. THE MATCH ITSELF: This was an exercise in everything that Bret Hart thinks is good wrestling with concessions to what Benoit thinks is good wrestling. Hart supplies the Heavyweight US Pro-Style match structure in the grand tradition by starting from a headlock, working through the Knuckle Lock segment, into stiff chops and punches and kicks- allowing for Benoit to hit big transitions with suplexes and counters. Here is my favorite part- as Hart uses Old School Finishers: A fucking GREAT DDT, a Memphis Piledriver, and Swinging Neckbreaker to counteract Benoit's State-Of-The-Art Japanese Suplexes and quasi-shootstyle submissions. EACH makes ONE concession as Bret Hart makes an Old School US Pro-Style Back Suplex become a super High-Angle Back Suplex, while Benoit takes a Boston Crab and mutates into his Boston Crab variation (that Jericho would later use as his finisher.) The OTHER cool thing

about this match was that it was a forgone conclusion that Hart was going to win so I was figuring that Benoit misses the headbutt and Bret procures the SharpShooter- instead they go totally high tech with the double finisher counter into a finisher ending and I was suitably amazed. Bret Hart who has been doubting his role in Pro Wrestling- probably because he is the greatest wrestler in North America and he is being treated like a glorified Lex Luger- is able to focus again and cut out all the horror around him and produce another great match after a long layoff from even an opportunity to have a great match. Meanwhile Chris Benoit is SO Automatically Great and SOO MONEY that his end being held up is such a forgone conclusion. Just a great fucking match, perfectly done by WCW and- the exception of Heenan's fucking embarrassing inability to ever go a whole minute without trying to get (his own) useless ass over- perfectly done all around. The ending and postmatch was absolutely number one and the best and it made me proud to be a wrestling fan. Fuck the bullshit- this match is why I watch Professional Wrestling.

Bret Hart vs. Owen Hart- Marathon Match- 7/9/94- (PHIL SCHNEIDER): This is from a house show, and is probably the best match I have ever seen which was never taped. (Editor's Note - yes, the match exists on tape. Yes, Schneider's sentence structure sucks.) I think what makes this slightly better than the Marathon match versus Flair is that Owen and Bret are so familiar to each other, this familiarity lends it self to a fluidity in their work which wasn't present in the Flair match. The match went a good twenty minutes before the first fall, this was the weakest point of the match as much of it was spent with Owen going all Memphis heel, with a lot of pulling of Bret's hair and stalling, the last couple of minutes of the first fall were really good though with Bret getting the win with a nice bridged roll up. The last forty minutes of the match are as good as any wrestling done in America in the 1990's. The style of the match is definitely old school American with a lot of mat wrestling, working over the limb and submission holds, the mat work was especially good, the transitions were very good looking with each reversal being very contested which gave it a much more realistic look than some of the showier mat work used in NJ juniors influenced matches. This is a perfect example of what made Bret Hart such a great worker, he was a master of the little things that make wrestling matches great. A lot of people criticize Bret's work because he doesn't do a many suplexes as TAZ throwing out lines like "five moves of doom." This shows an ignorance of what a great wrestler is. The high impact moves in this one hour match were pretty limited, a second rope superplex, a tombstone piledriver, a regular piledriver and a diving headbutt, but they meant so much more in the context of the match, than they do in many current U.S. matches where they are thrown out in the first five minutes. However each blow thrown was credible looking, every move was sold, Owen worked on Bret's leg and Bret sold the injury the entire match, each one of the falls made sense, and the crowd was really into each move.

The psychology in this match was really interesting, even though Owen was the heel (and he was in full Austin Idol mode for the first part of the match) he was really put over strong, and Bret was almost made to look weak. Each man scored two falls in the regular period, Owen got a pair of submission victories using a figure four, reapplying the move immediately after getting the first submission and quickly getting a second (which I really dug, as it is something that

makes total sense, but you rarely see in these types of matches.) Bret however won both of his falls with flash roll ups.

The end of the match was even odder. Owen does a beautiful reversal of a tilt-a-whirl into a tombstone, hits a flying headbutt and puts on the sharpshooter, with Bret hanging on to the time limit to avoid submitting. They then do a really hot overtime period, with Bret doing an awesome reversal of Owen's sharpshooter into a sharpshooter of his own for the submission. Just a super match, which was superior to their Wrestlemania match and is the best marathon match I have ever seen.

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NEXT WEEK:TORYUMON! TORYUMON! TORYUMON! RYAMA GO! IWRG! GAEA! GAEA~!
GAEA! ARSION! OTHER STUFF!

THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYBOYS.

seven fists in the face of wrestling

^^*^*^*^*^

I want to shake like LaGuardia,

Magic Mouth in the sun.

Take a ride to the courtyard,

before you can run.

-THE CARS

(Benjamin Orr: 1947-2000)